



**LAW COMMISSION OF ONTARIO
COMMISSION DU DROIT DE L'ONTARIO**

BACKGROUND

Family Law Processes Project

Extensive consultation with people associated directly with providing services related to family law, academics, lawyers, the judiciary and government representatives identified many aspects of family law as in need of significant reform. The LCO held a Family Law Roundtable in September 2008 that enabled it to narrow down project possibilities to two options, one related to process issues and one on the matrimonial home.

The LCO circulated a paper describing the two project options to 135 stakeholders, some of whom distributed it within their networks. Overall, during this consultation phase, the LCO received comments from 45 stakeholders, including academics, lawyers (in private practice or working for Legal Aid Ontario), judges (from the Superior Court of Justice and the Ontario Court of Justice, including the two chief justices in personal conversations), mediators, social workers, women's groups (Aboriginal and francophone), centres for victims of domestic violence, alternative dispute resolution centres, court based Family Law Information Centres, community based family law information and resource centres, legal clinics, the Ministry of Attorney General Office of the Children's Lawyer, lawyers' associations (Law Society of Upper Canada, Ontario Bar Association, The Advocates Society) and individual members of the Ontario population.

Although responses were supportive of both options, there was greater support for a process-related project. Process reforms are required to address issues that have a significant impact on the capacity of individuals to access the family justice system. If addressed, these issues would permit more effective use of substantive provisions.

The project that has developed from this consultation process, "Best Practices at Family Justice System Entry Points: Users' Needs and Workers' Responses in the Justice System", will explore the following questions:

- How do Ontarians find their way to the legal system when they experience family conflicts?
- What kind of information and services do they receive at these entry points?
- How can system workers best orient users and facilitate early conflict resolution?

The LCO Board of Governors approved this project on April 2, 2009. It will be conducted from April 2009 to November 2010, approximately eighteen months. As part of this project, the Law Commission will hold public consultations, the form and dates of which will be announced at a later stage in the project.

A full project description can be found on the LCO website.

If you have questions regarding this project, please contact Julie Lassonde, Research Lawyer, at (416) 650-8406 or as follows:

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